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THE TURKS OF CENTRAL ASIA:

IN HISTORY AND AT THE PRESENT DAY[1]

AN ETHNOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE PAN-TURANIAN PROBLEM

The Pan-Turanian Movement.

186 THE Pan-Turkic or Pan-Turanian movement, supported by the most aggressive portion of Turkish and German public opinion, is a diplomatic activity, the object of which is to subjugate to the Osmanly Turks directly, and to the Germans indirectly, all those countries in which various Turkic languages are spoken. Although its purpose is probably strategical and economic—the acquisition of the cotton of Turkestan, the gold of the Altai, and Central Asian riches in general[2]—this is hidden beneath the cloak of fostering the supposititious desire of various peoples between Thrace and Mongolia
121 for racial and national unity. Only a close study of the peoples whose tongues belong to the Turkic linguistic family can throw light on the moral side of this activity, and show whether the Pan-Turanian programme involves merely a desire for aggrandizement or whether it covers any other relationship, more

[1] The present work is an enlargement of a lecture delivered in the School of Oriental Studies in London on October 24, 1917.

[2] See Appendix A.

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essential than the linguistic one, uniting Central Asia with Constantinople.[1]

A brief review of the Pan-Turanian programme will be necessary before approaching the main object of this essay, i.e. the study of the Eastern or Central Asiatic Turks. The term Central Asia, in accordance with Humboldt's definition, embraces the area lying between the Himalayas and the Altai Mountains, the Caspian Sea and Khingan Range. As far as the Western or Osmanly Turks are concerned, they are dealt with in several recent publications, namely, Sir William Ramsay's *The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor* (Oxford University Press, 1916), Professor H. A. Gibbon's *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 1916), Lord Eversley's *The Turkish Empire: its Growth and Decay* (Fisher Unwin, 1917), and *Le Problème Turc*, by Count Léon Ostroróg.[2] Though not dealing primarily with the racial question, these books give a vivid picture of the variety of races living under Osmanly (Ottoman) government, and of the artificiality of the ties that unite them. Sir William Ramsay further tells us how the Osmanly government has tried to develop feelings of unity and patriotism among its subjects on the ground of the common participation in the Islamic religion. But Pan-Islamism—Islam not being exclusively the property of the Turks—would in itself hardly serve to strengthen the position of the Turkic elements of the empire against Arabian and

[1] Since these pages were written the British advance in Asiatic Turkey, together with the situation produced by the Russian Revolution, has led the German-Osmanly diplomatists to revise some 'details' of their programme. See Appendix B.

[2] An English version of this work, entitled *The Turkish Enigma*, in Winifred Stephens's translation, has just been announced by Messrs. Chatto & Windus.

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other alien Mahometans. To give prominence to the Turkic element was not so simple, considering that five centuries of residence in Europe have influenced the ruling classes of the Osmanly in such a way that they have completely lost contact with the Turkic masses subject to their rule; while these, again, by mixture and contact with the races of Asia Minor and south-eastern Europe, have lost the Asiatic character that they once possessed. Yet the upper classes of the Osmanly did not become thoroughly Europeanized, as the Hungarians did under similar conditions, and hence their chances of assimilating the lands and peoples that they conquered in Europe were almost non-existent even before the Balkan War. After that war, there was nothing left to the Osmanly but to turn to Asia, upon which they look as a land of expansion and of compensation for what they have lost in Europe. Hence, a justification for this change of policy was necessary, and this was easily found in the so-called principle of the self-determination of nationalities. The Osmanly thereupon proclaimed themselves to be of one nationality with the people of the far Asiatic lands of Turkestan, Jungaria, and the Siberian steppes.

It may be argued that there is something in the political atmosphere of our century which makes people revert, as it were, to past ages. All who have affinities with both Europe and Asia seem to be ready now to claim their Asiatic blood, as we see that the Bulgarians, the Hungarians, and the Siberian Russians are doing.

But in the case of the Osmanly the sincerity of such a movement becomes doubtful, when we consider that the Osmanly *intelligentsia* have so far never felt themselves at one even with their own Osmanly common people. Thus they have never passed, as have the

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517 educated classes of the European countries, through
• 186 a stage of 'folklorization' and 'nationalization' due to
565 contact with the masses, who through their backwardness preserve more of their national traditions. Even the Revolution of the 'Young Turks' did not bring about the breakdown of the caste distinction, and it was, in fact, like all other events in the political history of the Osmanly, a mere imitation of the Western nations, rather than a spontaneous outbreak of national feeling
186 against imperialistic government. There is no doubt
517 that such a truly national movement did begin when some years before the Balkan War a literary attempt led by Ziya Bey, Ahmed Shinassy Bey, and Namyk Kemal Bey, was made to purify the Osmanly language from its Arabian and Persian admixture. It is noteworthy that two of those leaders, Ziya Bey (later Pasha) and Kemal Bey, when exiled from Turkey by Sultan Abd-ul-Aziz for their political ideas, found refuge in London. But, before their brilliant writings brought about any literary revival or social revolution, the movement was checked by the subsequent political action of the 'Young Turks', or strictly speaking by the Committee of Union and Progress (Ittikhad), after they successfully abolished the influence of the more sound rival group, the Committee of Unity and Freedom (Ittilaf). The Pan-Islamic propaganda—bound up as it is with the Arabic language and culture—when carried on by that party in non-Turkic Islamic countries, ran contrary to the attempts of the literary reformers to free themselves from foreign
[648] culture. Meanwhile, the political and economic dependence on Germany imposed by the ruling classes on the Osmanly country did not favour the further development of linguistic and other internal reforms.

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And so it happened that before Turkey had succeeded in emancipating herself from her obligations to Europe, Persia, and Arabia, she fell a victim to ambitions[1] the extent of which nothing but the outcome of the war and the fate of the peace settlement will decide.

When, after the Young Turks' Revolution, various European institutions arose in the Ottoman State, there was set up the Academy of Turkish Science ('Turk Bilji Dernayi'), which utilizes the researches of English, French, German, Russian, and other European scientists to further the political plans of the Osmanly. Thus all attempts at finding what the culture of the Turks was like in their original home and in pre-Mahometan times, and what survivals of that culture and of the old race exist, are being interpreted by the Young Turks in such a way as to support the hypothesis of the racial identity of the Osmanly with the Eastern Turks. It seems almost cruel that the process of nationalization started among the educated classes of the Osmanly should be checked by a new 'revival', which, through its very artificiality, is disturbing the natural development of the Osmanly. Just as the first movement led to the substitution of the name 'Turk' for that of 'Osmanly', so now, with the rise of political dreams concentrated on Central Asia, the name 'Turk' is being abandoned in its turn for a name with a more Asiatic sound, viz. 'Turanian'. By using this word, the Osmanly intend to emphasize their claim to descent in the direct line

[1] Tekin Alp, *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal*, English translation, London, 1916; M. Hartmann, *Unpolitische Briefe aus der Türkei*, Leipzig, 1910; J. Germanus, *Turk Darnay*, K. S., 1909, X, Budapest; V. A. Gordlewski, 'Note on the "Turk Darnay" in Constantinople' (Russ.), *Eastern Antiquities*, Trans. E. Sect. I. R. Arch. S., IV, 1913; A. Tyrkova, *Old Turkey and the Young Turks* (Russ.), Petrograd, 1916; H. M. A. Sarron, *La Jeune-Turquie et la revolution*, Paris, 1912.

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from the people who left behind the old archaeological remains in Turan (Central Asia).

In many instances this propaganda assumes naïve form. Half-legendary kings and leaders of the Turks in Asia have been set up by the propagandists before the Turkish soldiers as hero-ancestors—to say nothing of such historical personages as Attila and Timur! Then again, a legend found by European investigators among many Asiatic Turks, to the effect that they originated from a she-wolf, has now provided an occasion for the abandonment on Turkish standards of the Mahometan crescent in favour of the pre-Mahometan Turkish wolf. The legend, of which there are several versions current among the Turks and Mongols of Central Asia, relates that a white she-wolf—or perhaps a woman with the name Zena (sometimes Bura), which means 'she-wolf'—found and reared an abandoned man-child, who became the ancestor of the Turks (or in the Mongol version—of the Mongols). This explains the appearance of that animal on the war standards of the early Central Asiatic Turks, particularly the Tu-kiu branch, a design imitated by the Osmanly during the present war. Though the Osmanly took up this legend as having been originally Asiatic, the latest researches seem to support the theory of de Guignes that it had a European origin, and was imported into Asia by the Huns. Assuming that the Huns were of Turkic stock, de Guignes thinks that when they were defeated in Europe and retired by way of the Volga, the Urals, and the Altai into Turan, they brought with them the Roman legend of Romulus and Remus, and gave it a Turkic setting by associating it with local Turkic traditions, so that

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subsequently it was accepted as if it had been of local origin.[1]

Such is the story of one of the 'historic heritages' claimed by the Osmanly. But, as a matter of fact, the more current version of the origin of the Turks is that which derives their tribes from Ogus-Khan, son of Kara-Khan, grandson of Dik-Bakui, great-grandson of Abuldji-Khan, who was a direct descendant of Noah. Such at least is the version given in one of the first attempts at recording the Turkic myths relating to their origin.[2]

If from the realm of mythology we turn to the physical or racial side, we are in perplexity as to why the drafters of the Pan-Turanian propaganda entirely disregard the fact that the Osmanly have now more Albanian, Slavonic, Thracian, and Circassian blood in their veins than they have Turkic; that their culture is more Persian, Arabian, and European than Central Asiatic; and that even in language there are divergences no less wide than are to be found among the languages of the Germanic family. All differences are disregarded, and linguistic similarity is magnified into linguistic identity.

Had the Turks and their allies, the Central Powers, been successful in their military plans, their intentions as regards Central Asia were as follows: '*Thirty to forty millions of Turks will become independent, and together with the ten millions of Ottoman Turks, will form a nation of fifty millions, which may perhaps be compared with that of Germany in that it will have the strength and*

[1] J. de Guignes, *Histoire générale des Huns*, vol. I, pt. ii, Book I, pp. 371-3.

[2] Recorded by Rashid al-Dīn, quoted by Radloff, *Concerning the Uigur*, p. 1.

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• 186 *energy to rise even higher.*'[1] It should be noted that the total number of the Turks is here exaggerated by some twenty million, and that the term 'nation' is used somewhat vaguely.

It is pretty certain that the several Turkic nations which the author has had the opportunity of meeting in Asia would be surprised if any one proposed to unite them in one local group on the ground of some remote tradition. Thus they would not understand any reason for a voluntary union, even with the Turks of European Russia, not to speak of still less known people. One cannot disregard the local national awakening of some of these groups, as for instance that of the progressive 'Young Sarts', or retrogressive Usbegs of Bokhara, or even the Kaizak solidarity which may develop into national feeling, but there is now no moral link which would unite these groups in opposition to a Democratic Russia. Apart from conquest, the only thing that would effectively bring them together would be identity of religion, language, and education, and some economic organization under which they would retain their lands, and be encouraged to a more progressive mode of life—not too rapidly introduced. Identity of religion does not exist at present, for within the Mahometan world—to say nothing of others—there are as many distinctions as among the Christians; nor do they know any common language except the Russian.

648 Since the Chinese and Russian Revolutions the confiscation of lands belonging to these Turkic natives is less likely to occur on the part of Russia[2] and China.

[1] Tekin Alp, *op. cit.*, Foreword, p. 5

000 [2] On June 25, 1916 (old style), there appeared a Ukaz from the

*[For footnote, see category 116, p. 17 --- Analyst]

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669 It would seem that
186 the prolongation of the Russian chaos would encourage the congregation of the Turkic elements, if the dis-association from the other people of the once Russian Empire was their aim. But so far neither the 'All-Russian Mahometan Congress' nor 'Mahometan Regional Councils' separate themselves from the general problems of Russia, even though they express interest in the Mahometans abroad, and the majority favour some kind of federal form of government. The Turkic population of Russia is not more uniform in political opinion than the Slavonic or Finnic branches; and so, the reactionary portion of them guided by Mullahs, and on the whole less affected by the Russian and more by the Central Asian culture, form an opposition to the Mahometan federalists.

The term Turanian.

103 The term 'Turan', from which Turanian is derived, is so Asiatic that we do not find it in the Greek authors, though the fact that it occurs in the *Avesta* in the form Tura points to its ancient origin.

779 It is said in the *Avesta* that Thraetona had three sons, Airya (Arya), who received as his portion Iran; Sairima, who received the western lands; and Tura, to whom fell the oriental lands. Again, Tuirya (Turya) is used in the *Avesta* as an epithet applied to the countries now called Turanian.[1] The people of Tuirya are spoken of as enemies of the people of Airya. Another
538 reference is found in the epic of the Persian poet Firdusi, the Shâh Naméh dating from the tenth century

[1] E. Blochet, 'Le Nom de Turc dans l'Avesta', *J. R. A. S.*, 1915, pp. 305-9.